

The Spirit of Truth and Love

1 John 4:1-21

When Theo was born he arrived late, 10 days late to be precise.

It was a week after the due date that our obstetrician
said "I think he's a big big boy, and for want of a better word, he's a bit stuck"
And so we were booked in for cesarean section.

Heading to the hospital we were very confident with our doctor

We met the anesthetist before the surgery who we were very pleased with
So we headed into the theatre fully assured of our team.

And so I was surprised to meet a totally different doctor

once we rolled Jas through the door.

He was a much older man and he didn't introduce himself
but he came over and started to reassure us and talk about the procedure
and I'm thinking "Who are you? And where's our guy?
Are you sure you're in the right room? What are you doing here?"

Anyway, a few seconds afterwards our guy walks into the room

and he explains once more, because I had forgotten,
that the hospital had a policy having two surgeons on for every procedure,
and that the older man was actually a very distinguished obstetrician,
in fact his own mentor and teacher back when he was learning his specialty.
And so my "Who are you?" very quickly became
"Oh! Honored to meet you. Thanks for being here!"

We have a similar "who are you and what are you doing here?"

moment at the end of last week's passage in 1 John.

The final verse of chapter three reads like this: The one who keeps God's
commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We
know it by the *Spirit* he gave us.

It's the first time that John mentions the Holy Spirit in this letter,
and when I was reading through the letter in preparation for this series
the first thought I had when reading *this* verse was to think
"What's he doing here? There's been no mention of him before!
What's he doing in the room?"

Well, we know by now that John is writing to help us know

both the truth about Jesus and the importance of love.

Now in 1 John 4 he explains how the *Holy Spirit* is vital for both.

If we, as Christ's followers, have determined that we will

(1) not forsake the truth, and (2) put love into practice,

then we *must* allow the Holy Spirit to do his work,

and we *must* have a clear picture of how he *carries out* his work.

And it's in today's passage, Ch 4, that we're provided with that picture.

so there will still be some things that the world and the Bible agree on,
 but we are starting to see the some remarkable differences
 between historic Christian teaching and what the world values, aren't we?
 If a message is easily digested by the world at large then we should ask
*"Now why has that message has gone down so well?
 Is it because it's simply feeding back to the world what it wants to hear?"*
 The shared ground between Christian values and worldly values is shrinking,
 and so messages seeking to please both should be scrutinized very carefully!

In the end I think surest test of all is found in verse 6
 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us;
 but whoever is not from God does not listen to us.
 We started our time in this letter by considering why it is
 that John sees *his* message as the one his friends ought to listen to.
 And what we learnt in those opening verses of ch 1
 is that John's authority comes from being an Apostle;
 he was one who knew Jesus, and heard Jesus
 and saw Jesus conducting his ministry, he saw Jesus raised from the dead,
 and so it's John's message that becomes the benchmark.

And the apostolic message, which comes to us today in the form of the NT,
 Not only describes who Jesus is
 but it also describes how Christians should live.
 And *depending on the age we live in,*
 It will be different aspects of this message that will be challenged.

In John's time the message about the true identity of Jesus was challenged,
 but in our day, one big challenge is the message about sexuality.
 The teaching of Jesus and his apostles is pretty clear,
 sex is a gift to be enjoyed in marriage between a man and a woman,
 but what message does the world send us?
 The world tells us sex can be enjoyed in an increasing number of ways.

I once spoke to a young woman who had no problem believing Jesus was God,
 But who also believed the traditional sexual boundaries were no longer applicable,
 and when I asked how she reconciled this decision with the Bible,
 her response was to say "the church will change it's mind in time"
 because as she saw it, the world's point of view was the dominant one.

And she's not the only one from within the church
 who wants to leave the door open for this kind of thinking
 I remember reading a book written by a Church of England priest
 who suggested that "we should always be listening to what the Spirit might
 be saying in this present age". Well, sure, the Holy Spirit is certainly active,
 but *never in contradiction* to what he has said in the past.

but on the Father's willingness to send him. John says it twice
he sent his Son into the world ... he sent his son as an atoning sacrifice.

When someone you love is in need, you send help, don't you?

I'm sure you've been watching the ongoing attempts to save those boys trapped in a cave in Thailand. It seems to me the people of that country are stopping at nothing to try and get them out. The country sends help, no matter what the cost, because it loves its children. And so it is with our Father in heaven, he sends help in form of his Son, because he loves us.

And it's the God who loves who lives in us. This is the second thread I'm pulling out: John says numerous times that God lives in us. Vs 12, 13, 15, 16.

The key verse for me is verse 7, where John speaks of being born of God.

That's Holy Spirit language,

we are born of God when the Spirit comes and dwells within us,

—meaning God is living in us—

and when someone comes and lives with you can expect your life to change.

Some of you may know that there are three adults who live in our house.

Since moving to our current place, Jasmine's sister Stephanie has been living with us, and it makes a difference when someone else moves in, a positive difference I might add. Stephanie is a much better cook than either of us, it makes raising a child much easier to have another adult around, and Steph is very generous with the use of her car.

And so when the Holy Spirit moves in, things can become different;
there's a discernable change.

For John's readers, and for us, it's the change from hate to love.

This is the third thread to pull out; the idea that as God dwells in us we take on his characteristics, particularly the characteristic of love.

V11 is just one place since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

And we love one another with the same type of love that God has shown us.

Do you watch movies about love? I know there is one very popular film
that's a few years old now called *Love Actually*.

It's set at Christmas time in London, and I know a few people who make a point of watching it at every Christmas. It's one of those movies that has—I don't know—nine different story lines interwoven together. (John would have loved it!), and they each tell a different story about love.

One story is about love between friends, another is a story about love between children, there's a story about unrequited (or unreturned) love, but one of the most moving is a story about a woman who has a crush on her co-worker, and the co-worker asks her out! But just at the moment when she is about to share a moment of intimacy with this man, her phone rings, and it's her brother who is in a mental institution, and so she makes the decision to leave

and attend to her brother. It's a picture of the love that exists between siblings, and not only that, but the love of providing something for the sibling who is in need.

And it's a picture of the kind of love
that marks out relationships between spiritual brothers and sisters;
a sacrificial love based on God's love for us,
a love empowered by the Holy Spirit as he lives in us.

And so friends, we must allow the Holy Spirit to do his work.
Imagine if I said to the doctor in the delivery room,
"that's ok, stand back, let me get on with it!" What foolishness, once we
recognize who he is and what he's there for then we say "Over to you!"
And the Holy Spirit will work in the way that he knows is best;
through the message of the Apostles,
and by leading those he dwells within to love one another.
Let's not resist his work: Bibles open, hearts open .

Lets pray.